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THE POWERS AND THE PARTITION OF CHINA.

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THE unusual attention given to Chinese affairs for two years past has been largely due to affairs in China which are foreign as well as Chinese. The scramble of European Powers has shifted from Constantinople to Peking, and into this scramble Japan and the United States have entered. The destiny of China seems to depend upon action taken in London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Paris and Tokyo. The future of Europe and America, and the question of the new "balance of power," depends on action taken in Peking. After all, in an unexpected way, one-fourth of the human race as concentrated in China must be reckoned with in making the map of the world.

The attitude of the great Powers to China is only partially indicated through the voice of the people, the press and public debate, and has scarcely been enunciated through the Governments. China is thus in the dark as to what others want or intend to do, and we are all more or less puzzled in proportion to our degree of solicitude for her welfare.

For two years the writer, in a campaign for the International Institute of China, has been brought in contact with influential and thinking men in as many as ten countries, and especially with those most deeply interested in, or responsible for, the character of the relations which the West will hold with the Far East. Necessarily, it is in many cases impossible to give an authorized statement of acting ministers, but we can give impressions and our grounds for certain beliefs, which may help to explain the real situation.

I. GREAT BRITAIN.—Every British Government, until the present, has been in favor of maintaining the integrity of China.

Parties have been agreed on this matter. So long as Great Britain was the predominant Power in China, this policy was unmodified. With the growing advance of other Powers, and especially with the increasing influence of Russia at the capital of China, the present Salisbury Government drifted into a policy of passivity. Instead of insisting on maintaining the integrity of China, it excused itself from that task, and insisted on maintaining British interests, whatever became of China. The strong position sustained in the speeches of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach in the early part of 1898 for the "open door," was relinquished for the new theory of "spheres of interest," as enunciated by the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, and as illustrated by the agreement made with Russia concerning spheres of railway and mining concessions. All the time, however, the Government has declared that the open door is not closed, and plainly shows a desire to have China kept intact.

The "open door" policy, or that of "equality of opportunity," is, no doubt, the preference of the British people. The burdens of a world-wide empire drive out ambition for further territory and political responsibilities in China.

At the same time, there has been a strong, active, persistent agitation for "spheres of influence," or more particularly for a British sphere of influence in the Yang-tse Valley. Not merely statesmen of the Opposition, but men on the same side of the House with the Government, have advocated these ideas. Several times the defense of the "open door" has been left to members of the Cabinet. The claim has been that there is no longer an open door, that the Government has weakened, that British interests are imperilled, that British influence has declined, and that the only hope for Great Britain is to "ear-mark" the Yang-tse Valley. The undercurrent is suspicion of Russia and the conviction that Russia has already practically taken possession of Manchuria, while Germany holds sway in Shantung. Very few openly declare for the partition of China, but their arguments, if carried out, would drift that way. In any case, China's wishes or rights are utterly ignored. This agitation, and its support by the London press, has tended to weaken British reputation in China.

Lord Charles Beresford came back from his commercial investigations in China with two propositions for maintaining the open door—the one military, namely, drilling Chinese troops for the defense of the Yang-tse Valley; and the other political, namely, a

combination of Great Britain, Germany, Japan and the United States, as antagonistic to Russia and France. Both of these propositions failed to secure the support of the British Government, and Lord Charles Beresford has, therefore, joined with the critics of the Government, and in doing so has drifted into the idea that the open door was closed, and that Great Britain should make sure of some special sphere, before all should be lost to her.

Nevertheless, the critics of the policy of the Government have latterly a slight impression that, if it is too late to argue for an "open door," it may also be too late to argue for a "sphere of influence." The agitation for a particular sphere has aroused other nations to make claims of their own. The result is such an intermingling of interests that division into separate spheres would be harder to effect than the maintenance of competition everywhere. For Great Britain to secure a sphere of her own would require one of three things. One way would be to secure it by agreement with China, but China would not, or could not, make such an agreement and retain even the semblance of sovereignty. Another way would be by agreement with other rival Powers; but, in attempting this, all that the British desire would not be granted, while other Powers would secure more in the way of recognized spheres than they now seem to aim at. A third way would be for Great Britain to consult neither China nor the other Powers, but to establish herself suddenly in the part that she seeks for her own; but this she cannot do without numerous complications with China and the Powers, and, furthermore, she has too much on her hands elsewhere to attempt such a colossal venture as an independent demarcation of her own sphere. Therefore, as the British already have interests outside the Yang-tse Valley, and other Powers have interests within the Yang-tse Valley, there comes the chance to China to be left unmolested.

II. RUSSIA.—The suspicion that the British hold toward the Russians with reference to China is about equalled by Russian suspicion of Great Britain. British suspicion arises from an ignorance of what the Russians really think or intend to do. Russian suspicion arises from the open declarations and threatening propositions of the British public and its free press.

Nine out of ten persons in the United Kingdom believe that Russia wants to take possession of the whole of China, or at least of Peking and all North China. Our personal conviction to the

contrary has always been received with surprise as a strange hallucination. The ground for this conviction can be briefly stated.

Russia is more of an Oriental nation than any other European Power. There is much in common between Russia and China. They are both conservative and autocratic in government. The proximity of territory and partial homogeneity of race would naturally lead these two nations to sympathize with each other, especially if others sought to intrude. Russia, as the stronger of the two, might have an ambition to dominate her neighbor, as she has dominated vast tracts and different tribes in northern Asia; but the international relations of both Russia and China forbid this. Russia knows that if she advances into China, other Powers will do the same. The subjection of the whole of China to Russia is a very different thing to the complex partition of China. The former is impossible; the latter to Russian eyes is undesirable. In Asia, Russia prefers a peaceful neighbor like China to her two European rivals, Germany and Great Britain—both intensely military and much wealthier than herself. The Slavic sympathies are more with the Mongolian than with the Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon, in anything that pertains to China.

There are those who praise highly the foresightedness of Russian diplomacy. It is a common idea that Russia forms a definite plan, and works for its execution, slowly but with determination, through years, and even into centuries. My own impression is quite different. The Russians are not long-headed either in commerce or diplomacy. They rather have a supreme belief in Providence as a destiny leading their race and their Czar to ever-expanding spheres of domination. They design nothing, for Providence is leading them on.

An essential factor in the political attitude of Russia is the Czar. He has already given proof of his peaceful intents, not only in world-wide problems, but specifically in China. He has announced to the world that Talien-wan is open to the trade of all nations, but few Englishmen and Americans have given even meagre praise to his published declaration and peaceful policy.

There is a small faction in Russia, led by Prince Oukhtomsky, which is positively friendly to China. In frequent conversations with this gentlemen, we were struck with his intense and intelligent interest in the welfare of China. His paper, the *Viedomosti*, is noted both for its antagonism to the British and its defense of

the Chinese. After hearing our plan for an International Institute at Peking, he had three editorials prepared in its advocacy, one being entitled in English "A Helping Hand to China."

The opponents of Russia generally close the door of discussion by the statement, "Russia has already taken possession of Manchuria." Facts, however, do not support this charge. Manchuria is still under Manchu rule, and the people pay taxes to China, not to Russia. There is even less interference in internal affairs than China complains of in other parts of China from other countries. Nothing has been done to frustrate the work of either Protestant or Catholic missionaries. The port of Newchwang is still an open port, and it is yet to be proved that foreign trade in Manchuria has been hampered by Russia. Russia, quite sensibly, has wanted an ice-free port, and the opportunity to improve the industrial development of her own extensive domain. She now seeks to become something of a commercial nation, and to extend commercial relations with the United States on the one side and with England on the other. She also aspires to predominant influence in Chinese affairs, as other nations do, and the time will come, perhaps, when education and missions, as well as commerce and diplomacy, will form a part of Russian enterprise.

All this is other than the scheme to dismember China. And yet the dismemberment of China is very much "in the air." Russia, therefore, is preparing and strengthening her position. Let any other nation seize a portion of Chinese territory, then Russia will at once seize Manchuria and Mongolia to march on to Peking. Russia, even more than many Englishmen, would prefer to have China held together.

III. FRANCE.—For many years France and Great Britain were joined in the effort to open up China. Latterly, France and Russia have been joined, and this last alliance has aroused the suspicion of the British. The chief influence of France in China has been missionary rather than commercial, and this fact tends to restrain any personal desires for Chinese dismemberment. From the beginning of treaty relations with China, all Catholic missions have been regarded as under the French protectorate. The only exception has been the case of Germany during the last decade. The special favor accorded to France has been increased within the last year by China's recognition of the official status of Catholic missionaries and the right of the French Minister at Peking to inter-

fere and protect. This, therefore, gives scope for French influence in every province of China, and also in Mongolia and Manchuria. France knows very well that, if China were to be dismembered, her influence in the missionary line would be curtailed. She, therefore, prefers to keep China intact and have influence everywhere in China.

In even the commercial line France does not care to be limited to a few provinces along the Tonquin border. She has a French "settlement" in Shanghai and Tientsin, and a "concession" in Hankow. She is the largest investor in the railroad to be built between Hankow and Peking. She has also great political influence at Peking. To divide China would not serve the interests of France.

IV. GERMANY.—The other leading European Power concerned in the future of China is Germany. The occasion for the rise of German influence in China was the massacre of two German Catholic missionaries in the Province of Shantung. One-third of that province is a German diocese. The protection of the Catholic mission within that section was transferred from France to Germany ten years ago. In addition, Germany has influence in a commercial way by securing as an outcome of the missionary difficulties the port of Kiao-chow, and certain railroad and mining concessions throughout the province. This is the German "sphere of interest," which may lead to actual possession. Such a result would not, however, be for the best interests of Germany. Germany has Protestant missions in the south where France would rule if China were to be dismembered. German merchants are also given wide scope for trade at all the treaty ports and through the natives far into the interior. A few high-handed officers or irresponsible adventurers may boast of making Shantung a German possession, but the German Government and German merchants would fare better by being friendly and true to China and by exerting influence over the whole of China. The danger to be faced is from the massacre of more Germans, which would cause Germany to ignore Chinese rule and proceed to rule for herself. In fact, I regard this as the greatest danger to the preservation of China. The Chinese in Shantung are turbulent, and, through the aggressiveness of the Germans, most hostile to foreigners, and especially to the Germans.

V. THE UNITED STATES.—Different from the influence of the

European Powers in China is that of the United States. While the equal of any of the Powers, this advancing Republic, the predominant Power on the American continent, has maintained from the year 1842 a friendly attitude to China. Even with the cry for expansion and her presence in Asiatic waters, she has displayed no inclination to participate in the dismemberment of China. Certain Americans are inclined to unite with the British in some definite China policy, while others look with favor on closer relations with Russia, but the National Government, in so far as it has a policy, puts forth no positive action either to divide China or maintain her integrity, but seeks to protect American interests as guaranteed by treaties. Naturally, this policy, like that of the British Government, is more allied to an "open door," with equality of opportunity, but there is no readiness to resist the aggressions of other Powers, so long as American trade is not hampered nor American citizens molested. It is, therefore, possible for the United States to maintain equally friendly relations with China, with Great Britain, with Russia, or any other Power, if nothing is done to eliminate China as a treaty-making Power, or to make sections of China partial to some one country in rights, privileges and opportunities. If China is not to be dismembered, there is no need for the United States to interfere, but if dismemberment is to be undertaken, the very existence of extensive American interests, commercial and missionary, and the fact that for over half a century the United States has had in Eastern Asia diplomatic relations equally with others, will require that the United States be not only consulted, but given an equal share in the distribution of new opportunities.

The average American has less respect for the Chinese as a race than have most of the European peoples. This is probably owing to the greater acquaintance on the part of Americans with Chinese laborers than with the better class Chinese, and to American legislation on the Chinese question. We hear much of the obligation of the Chinese to observe the treaties, but very little of American obligation in relation to China. In consequence there is striking unconcern as to the welfare of the Chinese or the permanence of the Chinese Empire. Very few realize the danger to American interests of allowing the dismemberment of China. The downfall of the Chinese Government is thought of as something similar to the displacement of Indian rule by British

domination, whereas China would be parcelled out among different nations, and would not be like one people under one foreign rule.

Any change of American sentiment in the direction of recognizing the importance of keeping China intact has been largely brought about by an increased conviction that, legitimately, the United States must enter into movements that affect the world, and more particularly by the ambition to expand American trade throughout the whole of China. The sense of fair play, furthermore, is shocked by such a colossal programme as that of trying to divide a great and ancient Empire among outside nations, mutually jealous and relying for supremacy on skill in warfare.

VI. JAPAN.—In any question that concerns China, Japan must have a part. As Japan is the neighbor of China, this is to be expected, and as she is the recognized equal of Christian nations, this is her right. To prevent the further aggressions of Europe, and especially of Russia, all the people of Japan may be said to be in favor of defending China and strengthening her independence. The end of China might be the beginning of the downfall of Japan. As Oriental nations, they stand or fall together. The question of the "open door" was hardly thought of when Japan vanquished China on sea and land, but when Russia, France and Germany proceeded to interfere in the result, and later on to make demands for privileges for themselves, which China could not resist, then Japan reversed her course and sided with China. An alliance, formal or informal, is inevitable.

Thus, through mutual jealousies of the nations, China may be held together. All seek their own interests first, from what some would term patriotic motives, and yet this very self-interest is dependent on the preservation of China. A scramble for conquest, possessions, sovereignty, in China would endanger the peace of the whole world. Even a struggle for established spheres of influence, with Chinese authority weakened more and more, would not only be treacherous to China but provoke such discord, animosities, riots and resentments as to make the loss and trouble of the participants greater than the gain and honor. Each nation, while anxious for more influence, is opposed to the increased influence of any other nation. The whole territory of China presents so many opportunities for foreign enterprise that all prefer competition to exclusiveness and dismemberment.

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